We claim:

1   1. A method of format detection for information having an information rate and
2   received over a communication channel of a communication system, the method
3   comprising the step of:
4   determining the format of the received information from the information rate
5   and a measurement of a time period during which the information was received at a
6   power level that is equal to or above a defined threshold whereby the time period is
7   measured by detecting transitions in the power level of symbols carrying the
8   information.

1   2. The method of claim 1 where the time period is measured from a sliding window
2   and a ratio of measured average power values for the sliding window.

1   3. The method of claim 1 where the communication channel is a guiding channel and
2   the received information is extracted from the guiding channel.

1   4.   The method of claim 3 further comprising the step of providing a lookup table
2   containing a list of M information size values for the guiding channel and lists of M
3   information size values for each of other channels where M is an integer.

1   5. The method of claim 4 where the communication system is a 3GPP compliant
2   UTMS communication system.

6. The method of claim 4 where the step of determining the format of the received information comprises the steps of:

    calculating an estimated information size value for information extracted from the guiding channel by multiplying the information rate to the measured time period;

    selecting at least one information size value candidate from the list of M information size values for the guiding channel based on the calculated estimated information size value; and

    applying the selected candidates to an algorithm for determining an actual information size value of the information extracted from the guiding channel when the estimated information size value is not equal to any of the M information size values in the list for the guiding channel.

7. The method of claim 6 where the step of calculating an estimated information size value further comprises the step of rounding off the calculated information size value to a nearest integer value.

8. The method of claim 6 where the format of the extracted information is determined from the calculated estimate information size value when that value is equal to one of the M information size values in the list for the guiding channel.

9. The method of claim 6 where the step of applying the selected candidates to an algorithm for determining an actual information size value comprises the step of:

    performing an error correcting decode operation on the extracted information that yields a result on which a tail bit test and an error detecting decode operation are performed.